

Deaf Culture Question of the Week – Mar. 14 - 18, 2011
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We appreciate your time in completing our short survey. We want to especially hear from our parents. See bottom of this question for the link to our survey.

Which book, now a classic, and published after the historic work of Bill Stokoe, could be said to have “legitimized” the linguistic study of ASL?

- a. *Linguistics of American Sign Language* – Clayton Valli, Ceil Lucas, Kristin J. Mulrooney
- b. *American sign language: a teacher's resource text on grammar and culture* Charlotte Baker-Shenk and Dennis Cokely
- c. *Signing Naturally*, Ella Mae Lentz, Cheri Smith, Ken Mikos
- d. *The Signs of Language*, Edward Klima and Ursula Bellugi

Scroll down for the answer.

Answer: “d” - All of the books mentioned were instrumental in the recognition of ASL as a legitimate language of study as well as many, many others. Answer “d” is the best choice for the following reasons.

1. Edward Klima and Ursula Bellugi were linguists working at the Salk Institute in San Diego, CA. At the time, 1979, when “*The Signs of Language*” was published they were respected linguists who had no direct connection to the deaf community. They were, however, fascinated with the potential of American Sign Language to inform their work in linguistics and cognitive science. They were primarily interested in the relationship between language and cognition. They recognized that if ASL was a language produced in a completely different way than spoken languages it might inform their work regarding deep cognitive and neurological sub-structures of the brain that produce the human ability to communicate through language.
2. Their first book on sign language, “*The Signs of Language*” was published in 1979 just when interest in the study of ASL was growing. It was the first major study of ASL from a linguistic point of view since Bill Stokoe’s seminal works in the 1960s.
3. Their book was published by the prestigious, Harvard University Press. The fact that a book on American Sign Language would be published by such a prestigious publishing company further legitimized the study of ASL as a true language.
4. Answer choices “b” and “c” are curriculums designed to help students learn American Sign Language. Much of their content is influenced by the work of Stokoe and Klima and Bellugi among others.
5. Answer choice “a” was not published until 1992. This book summarizes well much of the research on American Sign Language that was done during the period from the mid 1970s to the 1990s.

The period from 1970 – 1990 could be considered the “Renaissance” of American Sign Language study. Stokoe’s historic recognition that the signing behavior of deaf people was language planted a seed but it took another 10 years or so before the linguistic study of ASL began to flourish. Many books and journal articles were published and scholarly conferences held where linguists shared their

analyses of the linguistic properties of ASL. Klima and Bellugi's work, *The Signs of Language*, was a pivotal publication that legitimized ASL as a complete, natural language.

Read about Ursula Bellugi and Edward Klima here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ursula_Bellugi

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Klima

“*The Signs of Language*” is a classic on the linguistic properties of ASL and should be in the personal library of anyone with an interest in the study of ASL.

Klima, Edward, and Bellugi, Ursula (1979). *The Signs of Language*. Cambridge: [Harvard University Press](#). [ISBN 0-674-80795-2](#).

Please take a few minutes to complete the DCQW Survey:

DCQW has been published weekly during the school year since January 2008. We want to collect information about who reads DCQW, how you use it, which kinds of questions you like best, etc. We created a short survey to collect information. It is completely anonymous. Please take a few moments to complete our survey. Your feedback will be greatly appreciated.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/L7RQNVX>

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